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ABSTRACT

The tempo of social change is ever more rapid and the rate of technico-economic change is still more rapid. But the transformation of man's psychosomatic system takes place much more slowly. Therefore, the theoretical premises of the development of the rural areas and of the local community should be considered on that background. The pressure of new phenomena in the sphere of the theory of needs and the maturing of new problems demanding solutions both on the scale of the local community and of the society as a whole, requires new theoretical methodological as well as programmatic and sociotechnical solutions. There is no universal theory able to generalize the law of social development by abstracting from the current accumulated stock of knowledge, way of thinking, and the range of ignorance. It is thus periodically necessary to verify the theoretical formulations, disclose doubts, and work out new theoretical ideas and modes of action. This applies to situations when the procedure of cognition of the social reality is improved and when an attempt is made to transform that reality. This paper discusses the determination of the content of the principal theoretical premises; the village as a scientific problem and social value of interdisciplinary research; the village and the humanist accounting; and the role of the village in the planning society and models of the future civilization. (Author/NQ)

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An Attempted Denomination of the Axiological Characteristics of the Theory of Rural Social Development in the Society of the Future

(Outline of the subjectmatter)

by

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(Warsaw, Poland)

I Determination of the content of the principal theoretical premises

There is such a thing as a universal law of social development as there are historically conditioned and variable mechanisms of social life. But there is no universal theory able to generalize that law by abstracting from the current accumulated stock of knowledge, way of thinking and the range of our ignorance. It is thus periodically necessary to verify our theoretical formulations, disclose doubts and work out new theoretical ideas and modes of action. This applies to situations when we improve the procedure of cognition of the social reality and when we aim to transform that reality. But it is first of all necessary to register the gaps in our research with the hope to reveal our ignorance which should grow in measure with the expansion of scientific attainments. As Jean Fourastie points out: "Unrevealed ignorance often generates errors. This applies not only to scholars, but also to publicists, political leaders, activists-in which case the consequences of such errors may be particularly dangerous".[1]

The tempo of social change is ever more rapid and the rate of technico-economic change is still more rapid. But the trans-

formation of man's psychosomatic system takes place much more slowly. This is the essence of the problem and the theoretical premises of the development of the rural areas and of the local community should be considered on that background. The pressure of new phenomena in the sphere of the theory of needs and the maturing of new problems demanding solutions both on the scale of the local community and of the society as a whole, require new theoretical methodological as well as programmatic and sociotechnical solutions.

The functions of the village and the local community in the society indicate the following directions of consideration and reflection:

a) the theory of needs and the present organization of social life, sensu largo, the mechanism and factors of change-in the cross section of micro-and macro-social change. Tradition and modernity;

b)spontaneous processes and planned processes;

c) directions of change and social goals, criteria of evaluation;

d) new tasks in the sphere of organization of social life and models of the future society (concrete-historical models flowing from social diagnosis at the current stage of historical development, a prospective model based on social prognosis based most often on the extrapolation of contemporary realities and aspirations and a utopian model expressing dreams and longings, without considering a proper evaluation of human nature and the laws governing the

psyche and social life).

Such a range of studies can only be accomplished by a large group of investigators who represent various scientific disciplines. Most fruitful methodologically would be analysis along the borderlines of the sciences. The above sketch is one variant of scientific preparation for this type of investigation.

II The village as a scientific problem and social value of interdisciplinary research

1.

The problems involved may be conceived retrospectively or prospectively. The range of the former conception reaches deep into history, for it is possible to investigate man's historical struggles to obtain nourishment even before the appearance of the village and communities of agricultural producers and animal breeders in the post-nomadic era. When the village and society in the European sense (village-town system) became in recent decades a subject of intensive research, various scientific disciplines began to cooperate: history and ethnography, sociology jointly with ethno-sociology, economy, etc., hence fields of science interested primarily in contemporary phenomena. When these studies were joined by prognostics and futurology the village commenced to be conceived also prospectively.

2.

The very essential problems here are: the hitherto or-

ganization of the labour process and the social structure of the producers of foodstuffs coming to an end? Will the village cease to exist as a local community, as a unit of settlement, as a distinct (in relation to the city) legal-economic organization? While the historical changes thusfar have not undermined the foundations of the village's specific and stable elements, the present situation is defined as:

- a crisis of the village and agriculture (in the stage of a conspicuous decline in the area of arable land, in the ratio of agricultural output to national income, the declining rural population in absolute and relative figures);

- the crisis in social values, connected with the functioning of the local community based on indirect inter-personal contacts (at the stage of intensive urbanization and industrialization in various socio-economic systems because of the progressive dissolution of the traditional rural local community, the considerable population displacement, the pressure of conceptions, views and values represented by city culture, etc. Due to all of these, there is a crisis in traditional values hitherto acknowledged and universally accepted by the rural population. To this must be added the fact that the values associated with folk culture, which to some extent continues to be a source of the national culture, are repulsed by the urban and consumptionist way of life and mass culture);

- the crisis of the natural environment (the growing threat from industrial technology which creates negative side effects upon nature and man in the spheres of biological and mental health).

3.

The above crises situation is regarded by some investigators and a considerable part of decision-makers as the unavoidable result of the development of industrialized and urbanized society. Certain adjustments are therefore often undertaken in order to remove the most drastic disturbances in the cycle of agricultural production and hence in the social order or symbiosis with nature. While various superficial diagnoses, which do not go deeply into the sources of the problem, often give rise to extreme views (the apocalypsse or paradise on earth). Conclusions are being advanced on the need of further mechanical elimination of all distinctions between city and country not only in the sphere of civilizing facilities, but in cultural patterns, method of organization of the labour process, in education, etc.

The cardinal problem hence arizes: what will be the place of the village, of agriculture and the culture of the local community in the future society? There is also the question whether the rural community is only a collectivity of producers-in which case the dominant problem is that of production economy and the system of management. Or whether it is first of all a collective of people with their needs and aspirations, values and obligations toward the broader society from which it expects benefits and goods not only of material character. The question is thus whether to apply an economic accounting or a humanist accounting (which regards jointly the problem of material and non-material needs from the viewpoint of the given system of supreme values).

III The village and the humanist accounting

1.

Proposition I. It must be considered that the neglect or belittling the importance of agriculture, or simply the difficult economic, technical and sociological problems of the rural areas have led to a crisis situation in the food supply not only in Poland but on a world scale. It is not a question, of course, of halting population migrations and thus creating a category of neo-serfs tied to the soil (glebae adscripti), but of the planned regulation of population efflux, depending on the technical level of agriculture in the given area. The fewer the number of people serving agricultural and animal production, the better, more efficient and varied must be agricultural machinery, the higher must be the level of farmers' education, the more developed the infrastructure, etc. The premature depopulation of the village must lead sooner or later to serious economic perturbations. The low profitability of agricultural output, the low prices of produce, the low prestige of the farmer's profession, limited access to civilizing-cultural goods and other factors create the phenomenon of the so-called negative selection, the result of which is the exodus of the most enlightened and enterprising people from the villages to cities or the emergence of a part-time farmers stratum which is unable to effectively increase agricultural production

2.

Proposition II. The attitude to the cultural heritage should evidently be critical and selective. Otherwise there

would be no social progress. But the ever faster tempo of life, the growing volume of technical information, the changed mode of organization of social life, the pressure of existing and aroused needs-these factors actively break down traditional socio-cultural systems and social values hitherto regarded desirable. This is the foundation of social pathology, of the social maladjustment of individuals and groups, of consumptionist attitudes which disincline to public activity in its broad sense.

Ethnographic and ethno-sociological research have many times confirmed the effects of disfunctional phenomena on social collectivities if the mechanism of public activity is too violently disturbed under the pressure of alien cultural patterns and if the social group is unable to organically assimilate the new complex of civilizing products (see R. Firth, B.Malinowski among others).

The violent destruction of the social values created by the old local community (not only the rural), cultural decomposition, the growth and intensity of sociopathic phenomena (called social pathology) endanger the very essence of the functioning of the mechanisms of the social micro structure irrespective of accelerated solution on the scale of the social macrostructure (although the influence of the "macro" on the "micro" is always noticeable).

3.

Proposition III. There are many ways of counteracting the above signalized phenomena. But their common denominator is a programme of <u>raising the quality of life</u> by <u>modernizing</u>

it. At the foundation of our social, economic and technical aspirations is the race for modernity. But modernity gradually becomes a fetish, a measure of progress, not only technical but also social, moral, intellectual... And here is where the hitherto proposed very general criteria are disappointing.

Tradition and modernity-this is the key problem in considerations on shaping the new Polish society, the rural community in particular.

The thought premises underscored above suggest the following general conclusion: solutions should be sought in the actual development of man's socialist environment (the social microstructure-the family, companionate circles,etc., and in the local community) and furthermore in proper conceptions of cultural planning.

As is evident, this problem considerably transcends the sphere of economics, of production. It is primarily a problem in the domains of axiology and sociotechnics, for it is impossible to conceive economic and administrative activity in modern society without social enterprise and self-management.

Here is a great antynomy: how to reconcile central planning with creativity, decentralization, regional planning, the principle of the free development of the individual's personality.

IV The village in the planning society and models of the future civilization

If it is accepted that in quest for the shape of the future society and village we ought to reach for the higher

values in managing economic and technical phenomena, then the question of the social ethos and protection of the social environment undoubtedly comes to the fore.

New scientific disciplines have matured in Poland which have the task of preventing the devastation of the tri-sphere: the biosphere, psychosphere and sociosphere.

Problems of the protection of various phenomena involved in that tri-sphere were formerly diffused over many scientific disciplines and were often underestimated or not observed. The development of Polish humanist thought, concern for the all-sided development of the personality and unease caused by the violent leap into the advanced stage of industrial civilization as well as the urgent need to retain a state of equilibrium in the tri-sphere-these are the premises for the new theories and new sociotechnical programmes. To these premises should be added confrontation with the attainments of world science and assessment of the situation in the technically most advanced countries (Japan, for instance). The famous appeal of U Thant, the analysis and prognosis of the Club of Rome and others confirmed the anxiety of Polish scientific centres. But the question was not to limit therapeutic measures to the analysis of external phenomena. It was necessary to reach to the deepest sources of the crisis of mankind.

Thus to be noted in Polish science in the last dozen years or so is the emergence of more crystalized conceptions of the protection of the human race in its various manifestations. There is also a growing anticipation that the system

of social planning will succeed to overcome the degeneration of industrial civilization.

The new research categories and principles of practical activity include

- sozoology - as the science of protection of the natural environment (1962, Walery Goetel),
- eutyphronics - as the science of protection of the human psyche against negative effects of industrial development (1971, Jozef Benka),
- histosociology - as the science of protection of the social environment (1973, Jerzy Damrosz).

The need for histosociology arose in connection with the progressing process of devastation of the sociosphere, the disintegration of the social environment felt particularly in microstructures. The relation between histosociology and sociology would be the same as that between sozoology and natural science and between eutyphronics and psychology and philosophy.

The present author was inclined to advance the proposition to distinguish a new independent scientific discipline the subject of which would be to protect the social microstructures, as the "social tissues", by the following considerations: a) the need for more intensive studies of social microstructures and their coalescence with the theory of culture, ethnosociology and futurology, b) the need to bring to the fore the forging of new personal ties in the dehumanized industrial civilization and c) to counteract the nega-

tive effects of "duplicated and reproduced culture" by propagating original culture, the living word and independent creation. The proposition also included adoption of a new name: histosociology (from the Greek histos = tissue)[2].

The social tissue consists of every system of social relations based on various types of social ties, hence of the dominant personal or material ties. The social tissue may be "healthy" or "sick", depending on whether it enables the all-sided development of the personality or if it hampers, disintegrates or destroys it. This is why histosociology would stress the kind of human bonds which are most beneficial to the development of the personality, namely personal ties or, more strictly, personal ties based on mutual goodwill.

The sphere of interests of histosociology would thus embrace some aspects of folk culture. For folk culture does not consist only of artistic customs, dress, building, etc. It is also rites and ceremonies, social and moral rules, neighbourly cooperation, various forms of autonomy in the local community, etc. It is hence an entire system of conceptions and views based on personal bonds and ties with nature.

Important here too are such questions as the organic continuity of culture; the ecological attitude of spatial planning, etc. But attitudes are here such elements of the social tissue which integrate and assure the proper development of the social microstructure on the basis of personal ties.

Histosociology is thus a version of sociotechnics and interpretor of the manner of preventing devastation of the sociosphere, closely linked with the theory of the social ethos and protection of the social environment.

It needs to be stressed that the conceptions protection of the social ethos or protection of the social environment do not mean the defence of all traditional social attitudes, patterns of thought and behaviour. For there is a constant process of historical change and of transformations of systems of values, ways of life, etc. But it is necessary to bear in mind the existence of ethical immutables. Protection in this sense means protection of man himself in his social environment.

If the broad theoretical horizons of development of the rural areas and the local community are regarded from that point of view, then it is possible to consider models of civilization of the future society. And this becomes all the more necessary if it is accepted that the type of civilization called industrial has its ultimate limit of intensity which cannot be exceeded by continuous quantitative increase. It does not seem to this author though that post-industrial civilization will be based on a variant of <u>industrial civilization</u> which does not lead to that extreme limit. Transformation ought to be of a qualitative, not a quantitative character.

Initiation of the scientific-technical revolution, the watchword of all humanity, creates the possibility-in the specific Polish conditions of socialist planning-of an earlier transition to the stage of post-industrial civilization. The

present author is convinced that post-industrial civilization may be realized before industrial civilization has reached its peak of development, for the former is precisely the stage when the deformations of the latter commence to be eliminated. This may moreover happen not only when complete material affluence has been attained and not only when industrial civilization has reached the extreme limit of intensity.

Post-industrial civilization is the stage when the primary value becomes protection of the natural environment, the consequences of which are not so much the checking of technical progress as giving it new directions (e.g., limiting chemicalization in favour of other forms of acting on nature). Solution of at least the most important technico-economic and physio-strategic (sozological) problems in the shortest possible time will safeguard humanity from self-destruction in a biological sense.

But it may be foreseen that the further stage of development of post-industrial civilization, which will be marked by an intensified scientific-technical revolution, will cause the accumulation of problems in the sphere of histosociology which will compel anew a humanist revolution. This will confront us with the need of implementing a model of a humanocentric civilization. The germs of a humanist revolution are already visible today in the forms of youth protests and revolts, calls for reform of the educational system and for permanent (continuous) education, the defence of lasting ethical values, etc. This is why the process of transformation of the rural areas and the local community cannot be regarded

as a final stage which is followed by a fully urbanized society.

The village is both a settlement and social unit. This requires very cautious and flexible approaches to spatial and social planning, so that the evolution of social ties and values constitutes a stage of organic development and not a sudden change carrying with it social disintegration.[3] But this is a subject of detailed analysis and studies. For it is not a matter of projecting still another social utopia.

1 Jean Fourastie, Mysli przewodnie (Guiding Thoughts), Warszawa 1972, p. 44.

2 The present author first signalized the problem and offered terminological propositions in the article entitled Wies i perspektywy rozwoju cywilizacji industrialnej (The Rural Areas and the Developmental Perspective of Industrial Civilization) in Czlowiek w pracy i w osiedlu (Man at Work and in the Housing Settlement), Warszawa, nr 6, 1973, pp. 5-16.

3 In a paper delivered at the European Congress of Rural Sociology at Rome (July 1973) I presented the following propositions:

"This view is based on the assumption that people ought to work and live in different types of micro-regions linked by a common eco- and socio-sphere subordinate to the basic administrative units, not differentiated into city and country. Such micro-regions are:

- micro-region (A)- the living zone (residential, the services: trading and social, cultural institutions, sports facilities, etc.) with a relatively small degree of pollution fromtechnological fallout, with large green belts and the peripheral main communications arteries not traversing the settlement, etc. People of various occupational groups, workers in large plants and farmers, for instance, may live in settlements of that zone. (There would be rapid means of transportation to other zones: industrial, agricultural, etc.);

- micro-region (B)- an industrial zone (polluted) which must be separated from residential zones by large spatial protective barriers (2-3 km green belt, etc.). People in zones of concen-

trated industrial plants should spend there only the regulation number of working hours then move to relatively clean areas, i.e., to the residential zones;

- micro-region (C)- an agricultural zone with small processing plants;

- micro-region (D)- a recreation-tourism zone with developed hotel and service bases, a thick network of tourist institutions, etc.;

- micro-region (E)- a zone of national parks without paths for mass tourism, including zones of strict reservations open only to scientists of appropriate specializations.

A further possible proposal is that small towns (of 2-5000 inhabitants) should be the subjects of experimentation in modern spatial planning in the sphere of micro-regional systems, with consideration of the above principles!